



# Department of Justice

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Southern District of Illinois

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**BELLEVILLE WOMAN CHARGED WITH HURRICANE KATRINA FRAUD,  
AGGRAVATED IDENTITY THEFT AND PUBLIC BENEFIT FRAUDS**

FAIRVIEW HEIGHTS, Ill.— Tina Marie Winston, a.k.a Tina Marie Gilmore, 34, of Belleville, Ill. was charged by a federal grand jury in a 13 count indictment with various fraud offenses related to Hurricane Katrina and other government programs, U.S. Attorney Randy G. Massey of the Southern District of Illinois announced today. The indictment was unsealed at the defendant's arraignment today.

The indictment alleges that beginning in September 2005, Winston defrauded the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) by claiming she was displaced by Hurricane Katrina in order to obtain expedited disaster assistance. The indictment further alleges that Winston, who was residing in Belleville at the time of Hurricane Katrina, committed mail fraud and sent correspondence to FEMA representing that her two daughters, who did not exist, had died during the flooding in New Orleans. She said that she saw them float away but had not yet recovered their bodies. Winston also told FEMA that when she found her daughters, she would need burial money. She also sent correspondence to FEMA representing that she was "having a hard time" and that she was depressed and going to counseling due to the loss of her children.

"Those who abuse the aid provided by taxpayers during times of crisis deprive their fellow citizens who are most in need of assistance," said U.S. Attorney Massey. "The U.S. Attorney's Office is committed to fully prosecuting those who commit fraud whenever and wherever it is found."

The indictment further alleges that Winston committed Social Security number and aggravated identity theft in applying for FEMA aid by using a Social Security number other than her own. The indictment also charges that Winston made false representations and statements to government agencies including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Agriculture. The remaining counts charge Winston with other public benefit offenses including failing to report her marriage of May 27, 1994, and her earnings as a child care provider to the Social Security Administration in order to receive Supplemental Security Income benefits. One count charges that Winston made false statements to the Social Security Administration by falsely telling agency she was "very sad" because she had lost family in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina and that she needed constant help and could not drive or watch children.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Illinois is a member of the Department of Justice's Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, created in September 2005 by Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales to deter, detect and prosecute individuals who try to take advantage of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Headed by Assistant Attorney General Alice S.

Fisher of the Criminal Division, the Task Force is comprised of federal, state and local law enforcement investigating agencies and the U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the Gulf Coast region and nationwide.

Information for the Winston indictment was obtained in an investigation conducted by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service; the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General; the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General; the State of Illinois Healthcare and Family Services, Office of Inspector General – Bureau of Investigations; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General; and the Illinois State Police Medicaid Fraud Bureau.

The case is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Suzanne M. Garrison.

An indictment contains only allegations, and defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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